

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Hurricane High School  
345 West Tiger Boulevard  
Hurricane, Utah 84737**

**March 25-26, 2003**



**Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Hurricane High School  
345 West Tiger Boulevard  
Hurricane, Utah 84737**

**March 25-26, 2003**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

**Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF  
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

**Patti Harrington, Associate Superintendent**

**Vicky Dahn, Director  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Specialist, Accreditation  
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Salt Lake City, Utah**

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## **FOREWORD**

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 25-26, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Hurricane High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Roy Hoyt is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Hurricane High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Hurricane High School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**250 East 500 South**  
**P.O. Box 144200**  
**Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**District 1**

Teresa L. Theurer  
66 Canterbury Circle  
Logan, UT 84321  
Phone: (435) 753-0740  
[teresatheurer@aol.com](mailto:teresatheurer@aol.com)

**District 2**

Greg W. Haws  
5841 West 4600 South  
Hooper, UT 84315  
Phone: (801) 985-7980  
[gregwhaws@aol.com](mailto:gregwhaws@aol.com)

**District 3**

Edward Dalton  
1323 Bryan Road  
Erda, UT 84074  
Phone: (435) 882-4498  
[edaltont@erda.net](mailto:edaltont@erda.net)

**District 4**

Joyce W. Richards  
930 East 5000 South  
Ogden, UT 84403  
Phone: (801) 479-5370  
[rjwrchrds@aol.com](mailto:rjwrchrds@aol.com)

**District 5**

Kim R. Burningham  
932 Canyon Crest Drive  
Bountiful, UT 84010  
Phone: (801) 292-9261  
[kreb84010@aol.com](mailto:krb84010@aol.com)

**District 6**

Tim Beagley  
3084 South 3550 West  
West Valley City, UT 84119  
Phone: (801) 969-6454  
[tbeagley@sisna.com](mailto:tbeagley@sisna.com)

**District 7**

John C. Pingree  
1389 Harvard Avenue  
Salt Lake City, UT 84105  
Phone: (801) 582-5635  
[jpingree@skhart.com](mailto:jpingree@skhart.com)

**District 8**

Janet A. Cannon  
5256 Holladay Blvd.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117  
Phone: (801) 272-3516  
[jacannon@mstar2.net](mailto:jacannon@mstar2.net)

**District 9**

Denis R. Morrill  
6024 South 2200 West  
Taylorsville, UT 84118  
Phone: (801) 969-2334  
[dmorrill1@attbi.com](mailto:dmorrill1@attbi.com)

**District 10**

Laurel Brown  
5311 South Lucky Clover Ln  
Murray, UT 84123  
Phone: (801) 261-4221  
[dbrown@aros.net](mailto:dbrown@aros.net)

**District 11**

David L. Moss  
1964 Hawk Circle  
Sandy, UT 84092  
Phone: (801) 572-6144  
[tedamoss@msn.com](mailto:tedamoss@msn.com)

**District 12**

Mike Anderson  
455 East 200 North  
Lindon, UT 84042  
Phone: (801) 785-1212  
[mike@mbaconstruction.com](mailto:mike@mbaconstruction.com)

**District 13**

Linnea S. Barney  
1965 South Main Street  
Orem, UT 84058  
Phone: (801) 225-4149  
[ellessbee@attbi.com](mailto:ellessbee@attbi.com)

**District 14**

Dixie Allen  
1065 South 500 West  
Vernal, UT 84078  
Phone: (435) 789-0534  
[dixie.allen@uintah.net](mailto:dixie.allen@uintah.net)

**District 15**

Debra G. Roberts  
Box 1780  
Beaver, UT 84713  
Phone: (435) 438-5843  
[debrar@netutah.com](mailto:debrar@netutah.com)

**Pamela J. Atkinson\***

1123 South 20<sup>th</sup> East  
Salt Lake City, UT 84108  
Phone: (801) 583-2375  
[pa44@msn.com](mailto:pa44@msn.com)

**Steven O. Laing**

Executive Officer

**Sara V. Sinclair\***

1340 North 1500 East  
Logan, UT 84341-2851  
Phone: (435) 754-0216  
[saras@sunshineterrace.com](mailto:saras@sunshineterrace.com)

**Twila B. Affleck**

Secretary

*\*Board of Regents Appointments*

*12/20/2002*

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**HURRICANE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

**School Administration**

Dr. Roy L. Hoyt ..... Principal  
Larry D. Johnson ..... Assistant Principal  
Steve Jurca ..... Teacher on Special Assignment

**Counseling**

Dana L. Stratton ..... Counselor  
Jody Rich ..... Counselor  
Larry Esplin ..... Counselor

**Support Staff**

Sandy Barrett  
Troylinn Benson  
Helen Buist  
Jeanette Campbell  
Karen Clyde

Denise Drake  
Sharon Ha  
Barbara Hill  
Sally Keil

Cheryl Sip  
Jenny Tafili

**Faculty**

Jeff Adamson  
Allen Beagley  
Cynthia Browning  
Gonnie Buell  
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Steve Christensen  
Summer Cornelius  
Lisa Crane  
Dave Cullimore  
Dustin Dayley  
Brent Dean  
Lane Dilworth  
Larry Esplin  
Angie Frabasillio  
Sandy Goulding  
Lorene Grant  
Kenneth Hawkins

Harold Hinton  
David Holt  
Chris Homer  
Tera Houston  
Marc Jensen  
Tral Johnson  
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Ron Kelsey  
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Fred Kulick  
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Content Marshall  
Sharyl Mathews  
Sharon May  
Rich Mildenhall  
Kelby Miller

Phillip Moore  
Fred Page  
Steve Pearson  
Boyd Prince  
Ron Quilter  
Mary Janice  
Richmond  
Stan Serafin  
David Sessions  
Bradlee Skinner  
Kathleen Snyder  
Deeanne Squire  
Leslie Taylor  
Debra Thornton  
Kem Vestal  
Marilyn White  
Randy Wyatt

## **HURRICANE HIGH SCHOOL**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Building a positive school community, which develops adaptable, compassionate citizens who are independent, critical thinkers.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- The school must strive for continual improvement.
- Parental support and involvement is critical.
- Student learning increases when the environment is safe and stimulating.
- Students are responsible for their own actions and decisions, both academic and social.
- Students have different emotional and intellectual needs.
- Students will rise to meet high expectations.
- Students benefit from real-life and hands-on learning experiences.
- Continual assessment is employed to improve teaching and learning.



## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Wendy Chalk, Lifelong Learning & Associates, Visiting Team Chairperson

Carolyn Hamblin, Kanab High School, Kane County School District

Sydnee Dickson, Granite School District

Heidi Mock, LaVerkin Educational Consultant

Georgia Loutensock, Utah State Board of Education

### **Observers:**

John Goldhardt, Snow Canyon Middle School, Washington School District

Jim McKim, Dixie Middle School, Washington School District

# **VISITING TEAM REPORT**

## **HURRICANE HIGH SCHOOL**

### **CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE**

Hurricane High School is a public high school located in Hurricane, Utah. The school services the communities of LaVerken, Toquerville, Virgin, Rockville, Springdale, and Apple Valley. Currently, 1,030 students are enrolled in grades 9-12. The school has a long history within the community dating back to the early 1900s. As the needs of the community have grown, Hurricane High School has adapted accordingly.

Dr. Roy Hoyt was hired as the new principal of Hurricane High School in 2001-02. At the same time, the school expanded to include ninth grade students. These significant changes have created both challenges and opportunities for the staff.

The profile of Hurricane High School was a study of the school's role in the community and of programs offered by the school, and included important student achievement data.

*a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Hurricane High School made a concerted effort to collect and analyze student achievement data currently available to the school. In particular, the school examined ethnic breakdowns, ESL growth, ESL Placement, ACT Composite Score Comparisons for 1998-2002, AP Scores from 1999-2002, State CRT scores, and student Grade Point Averages (GPAs) for each grade level.

Most of the data collected for the school's profile was not sufficiently disaggregated. As a result, meaningful analysis of the data was limited to general patterns or trends. For instance, according to the data, it appears that students entering Hurricane High School in ninth grade do not perform as well as their peers in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Without additional disaggregation, the school is unable to discern whether or not this trend is true for all student subgroups and whether this pattern holds true for all content specific departments. Disaggregating student data in the future could greatly improve the staff's ability to identify specific groups of students who may be struggling.

*b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Hurricane High School is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze pertinent student data to guide the decisions of the school. It is suggested the administrative staff, Counseling Department, and

staff collaborate with the district in designing an effective data collection and management system that can be used by the different stakeholders (i.e., teachers, counselors, parents, administration) within the community. Furthermore, the school is encouraged to research what profiling data would be helpful to the school beyond that which the school is already collecting. Attendance records, suspension and expulsion rates, Stanford 9 test scores, district assessments, graduation rates, and course enrollment patterns of students could be helpful in identifying specific student subgroups in need of additional support and/or resources.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Hurricane High School recognizes the need to collect and analyze data prior to identifying a school improvement effort. In the school's quest to become more data-driven, Hurricane High School is strongly encouraged to take the next step. This would include incorporating a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the action plan. Currently, the plan has limited collection to benchmarking the implementation of each goal—in other words, asking, “Did we do what we said we would do?” The action plan does not identify a means for evaluating whether or not the school's improvement efforts had the intended result—in other words, asking, “As a result of doing these things, has student achievement improved?”
- In analyzing student achievement data, the staff should also pursue exploring possible correlations between student achievement and other measures of student success, such as attendance, course grades, participation in school activities, etc. Some questions that might drive further inquiry include, Do we have students who attend regularly but are not performing up to their potential? Are high achieving students making adequate yearly progress in our classes? How do we know? Are there patterns or trends in attendance and achievement that can be attributed to a certain grade level and gender, grade level and ethnicity, and/or grade level and subject area?
- Lastly, the staff is encouraged to pursue examining the correlation between class grades and standardized achievement tests. Are students passing their coursework but failing to pass state tests? Are students passing state tests but performing poorly in class? How does the school reconcile these differences? As the school moves toward a standards-based curriculum and assessments, grading systems and data collection should be designed to measure and monitor student learning. Hurricane High School has taken a first step in this direction, but has a ways to go before an effective system for collecting, analyzing, and using data is in place.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

Hurricane High School engaged in a collaborative self-study process. Many of the staff members assumed leadership roles in facilitating the school's self-study. As with many schools, student participation was limited. As Hurricane High School deepens its collective understanding of how to use this process to improve conditions for learning, student voice should play a greater role. The school is encouraged to seek innovative methods for engaging all types of students in conversations focused on school improvement.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

Hurricane High School's self-study captures many of the school's strengths as well as its limitations. However, additional data and analysis is required to pinpoint achievement gaps, student concerns, and potential improvement targets for the future.

## CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Hurricane High School identified four goal areas for students, which they have deemed most in need of improvement. Each goal area defines desired results for student learning (DRSLs). The four goal areas are:

1. Life-long learner
2. A personally and socially responsible citizen
3. An effective communicator
4. An employable citizen

### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The first year of the self-study process was spent creating the mission and beliefs through dialogue with parents, students, staff and other community stakeholders.

The process also included the development of a set of desired results for students at Hurricane High School.

While the establishment of a mission, belief statements, and desired results was highly collaborative, ownership of them does not seem to be schoolwide. Students and staff indicated that, despite their initial enthusiasm for the process and conversations that resulted, the general lack of understanding of how to use the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs to drive the work of the school has dissipated the momentum originally generated. As a result, some faculty members and most students and parents interviewed by the Visiting Team view these outcomes of the self-study process as incidental.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Students experience a high level of support from teachers and the administration. Classroom observations and student interviews conducted during the visit confirmed this belief. The Hurricane High School staff, administration, and students are extraordinarily positive toward one another. Students of varying backgrounds overwhelmingly indicate high levels of satisfaction with peer relations and teacher support. Support systems are in place for many students who are not achieving their potential.

Upon examining the written belief statements, the Visiting Team noticed that several of the belief statements reflect expectations or goals for student behavior. Since belief statements represent a set of guiding principles for the staff, they should be limited to principles for which the adults in the organization hold **themselves** accountable. Hurricane High School is strongly encouraged to refine the beliefs so that they reflect standards for all those working within the organization. For example, one of the belief statements states, “Students will rise to meet high expectations.” This belief might be restated, “As role models for our students, we maintain high expectations for our own professional conduct.”

The climate at Hurricane High is very positive. This is due in large part to the attitudes and behaviors of the staff. The school’s belief statements and goals should reflect the adult practices that affect this school culture.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The school’s mission, beliefs, and DRSLs were the result of comprehensive process facilitated by the leadership team. It is evident from the resulting products that care was given to ensure consistency in purpose and direction among the three. The school’s mission (or purpose) is closely aligned to its vision for student learning (i.e., its DRSLs) and its beliefs regarding the responsibilities of the administration and faculty to ensure that the vision is achieved.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure that the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

There are indications that many departments are focusing on curricula aligned with the State Core Curriculum Guidelines. The Hurricane High School Quality Curriculum Focus Group surveyed and reviewed the curriculum needs of the school. Teachers, parents, and students have all been involved in this focus group. Teachers at Hurricane High School have posted on the Internet disclosure statements for each Core class that are aligned with the Utah Core Curriculum guidelines (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills). There is evidence that teachers are beginning to align the individual and group assignments with standards and goals reflected in the Utah Core Curriculum guidelines. Staff and students have indicated there is a need for the departments to go beyond teaching the basic goals as presented in the Core Curriculum and collaborate across departments to provide the students with the opportunity to have a more in-depth learning experience for the specific goals. It is very important that the written, the taught, and the assessed curricula be aligned not only with State Core standards, but with the school's vision for student learning (or DRSLs).

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

According to interviews with the teachers, the **explicit** teaching of the skills and habits of the school's DRSLs is just beginning. The school's Quality Curriculum Focus Group has provided surveys to the focus group members and to all teachers to determine the areas of concern and school/student/community curriculum needs. Based on survey results, recommended curriculum action goals were identified and included in the school's action plan.

Teachers have posted disclosure statements on the Internet for all of the Core classes that are aligned with the DRSLs. This has provided students and parents with the opportunity to view the vision teachers have for the students in each Core class. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff identify a set of specific indicators for each DRSL. These indicators would clarify each desired result in terms of student behavior. The staff has yet to answer questions such as, "What is a lifelong learner?" "What does it mean to be an effective communicator?" and "What are the visible and measurable behaviors that we believe all students need to master before they leave high school?" Without a clear set of indicators or teaching objectives for each DRSL, they will remain an esoteric vision for student learning, rather than a concrete set of objectives that students will master.

Lastly, interviews with students and staff indicate that more collaboration between teachers within a department and across departments would be very beneficial to the learning environment provided for each student. Students indicated that the curriculum they experience lacks a sense of cohesiveness and relevance. Skills and concepts taught in classes are taught in isolation, rather than integrated to provide opportunities to reinforce, apply, or connect ideas common to different content areas.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The majority of activities observed during the course of the visit involved direct instruction to students, followed by demonstration teaching and independent work. The Visiting Team also observed many teachers facilitating independent student work and laboratory exercises. Students report that teachers often provide some activity during the teaching process.

The Visiting Team also observed some teachers employing research-based teaching activities such as the use of technology, collaborative learning structures, role-playing, simulations, and Socratic seminars. The Visiting Team applauds the work of teachers who are making efforts to broaden their instructional repertoire to incorporate a wide variety of research-based instructional methods. Although the self-study reports, “A high majority of teachers use a variety of instructional strategies,” observations during the two-day visit did not confirm this belief. The staff may want to conduct their own classroom observations to ensure that a greater variety of research-based teaching activities are, indeed, being used on a regular basis. The over-dependence on direct instruction as the primary instructional method may be hindering some students from achieving their true potential.

Throughout the site visit, many students reported that teachers often provide activities during the teaching process. Most of them reported feeling engaged in the learning process. Some students suggested that teachers are unaware of how students perceive the classroom environment, and they would like to see student surveys or other forms of feedback regarding the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in meeting their learning needs.

Teachers expressed frustration over the lack of access to the computer labs and technology in general. The Visiting Team recommends that the Instructional Design Focus Group explore alternative sources of funding and creative scheduling solutions to address this issue.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team was impressed by the high degree of dedication within the teaching staff. Hurricane High School offers honors classes, AP classes, and concurrent enrollment courses in partnership with Dixie State College to meet the needs of gifted students.

The faculty seems exceptionally approachable. Students reported that they feel very comfortable seeking out extra help when they need it. Care should be taken to ensure that those students who are reluctant to seek out help are identified, and research-based activities used to meet their needs.

The focus group has recommended the development of a peer-tutoring program. The Visiting Team encourages the implementation of this plan.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Efforts have been made to provide additional opportunities that support student learning, such as individual teaching assistance after school, peer tutoring in the Special Education Department, and monitoring attendance. Hurricane High School also provides many extracurricular activities. The staff is encouraged to collect data in order to investigate the effectiveness of these programs in meeting student needs, as well as whether or not all groups of students are able to take advantage of these support structures. The staff should research creative ways of providing additional opportunities by investigating how other schools are reaching all subgroups of students.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The staff has indicated that, based on their findings, clearly defined expectations for student achievement and performance standards are not fully developed. Conversations concerning testing are generally focused on CRT and SAT results. There is a desire among the staff to develop and incorporate formative benchmark classroom assessments in order to determine who is learning or not learning. The Visiting Team applauds the school's desire to move away from depending on state test scores for determining the learning needs of their students. Common formative classroom assessments, used by all members of a department, will provide more timely data that will allow teachers to adjust instruction accordingly.



- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The staff reported using a variety of assessments including portfolios, projects, activities, and paper-and-pencil assessments. Student and teacher interviews confirm that teachers are willing to incorporate a variety of assessment tools. However, most assessments are designed by individual teachers in isolation from their colleagues. Therefore, classroom assessments lack a consistent standard for rigor, design, or alignment to the Core Curriculum. Student performance standards are set by each teacher rather than by the department or school. The staff is encouraged to explore the research available on standards-based assessments and the role assessment can play in improving student achievement.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

In the written report of the self-study, there is an indication that bias may be inherent in some assessment practices. The report and follow-up conversations indicate that this is a twofold issue. Some teachers may not be aware of inadvertent ways in which bias is introduced into the assessment process. The second issue is a communication issue; students are not always informed as to the criteria for the assessment. There also seems to be a disconnect, at times, between the curriculum being taught and the assessment that measures student learning.

Teachers are genuinely concerned about student achievement and want **all** students to learn at high levels. A variety of assessments are used to help determine what students know and are able to do. Teachers desire time to help them continue developing assessment tools, curricula, and instructional strategies that will better meet the needs of **all** students.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The school's leadership recognizes the need for continuous improvement of the schools academic learning climate and teaching practices. To this end, the administration encourages, supports, and provides opportunities for the teaching staff to deepen their understanding of research-based best practices. Many of the staff members have participated in a wide variety of professional growth activities, while others have participated only marginally. The leadership is encouraged to seek and create opportunities for all the teaching staff to participate in school site inquiry and learning opportunities. This might include structuring time to refine and extend the staff's understanding of teaching thinking and reasoning, differentiated instruction, and literacy strategies, and/or developing alternative assessments.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision-making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The leadership at Hurricane High School has taken considerable steps to employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative. The recognition and commitment to moving the organization and classrooms in this direction are definite strengths of the leadership at Hurricane High School.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Hurricane High School is still learning how to develop a comprehensive assessment system. Currently, other than individual teacher-made tests and grades, standardized testing data is the primary tool employed to analyze instructional effectiveness. As Hurricane High School moves to incorporate the DRSLs as a curriculum focus, additional tools will be needed to measure and track student progress in achieving these desired results. Additionally, as departments engage in course alignment activities, the development and reporting on common benchmark assessments (i.e., among teachers teaching the same subject and grade level) could provide a valuable source of data for monitoring student achievement and instructional effectiveness.

The Visiting Team is confident that the leadership and staff will pursue the development of a comprehensive assessment system over the next six years.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The leadership of the school provides skillful stewardship of the organization. Schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for learning. The allocation and use of resources are often aligned with the school's goals.

The administration believes strongly in cultivating staff leadership in activities and decisions pertaining to the school's instructional program and policies. The administration and the Visiting Team recognize the contributions and sacrifices of the focus group leaders and school accreditation leadership team during the self-study process. All are to be commended for taking an active role in the stewardship of the school. The focus group leaders are encouraged to continue their leadership activities to ensure the whole school maintains a focus and commitment to the school's action plan and the recommendations of the Visiting Team.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Hurricane High School has not had sufficient time or opportunity to incorporate the school's DRSLs into the school's decision-making process. Hurricane High has yet to adopt a set of indicators for each DRSL. According to the school's self-study, the indicators identified in the document are currently "proposed."

As the school moves to adopt a set of indicators for each DRSL, the next challenge will be to develop a means for assessing and reporting student progress relative to each DRSL. Once this information is available, the leadership will be able to make better decisions when allocating resources to all ensure students are becoming (according to the DRSLs) lifelong learners, personally and socially responsible, effective communicators, and employable citizens.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school leadership has made a concerted effort to empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning. Parental and community participation (e.g., TRIO, Dixie State College) in the school was evident. Parents and students were solicited to serve on the focus groups. Numerous community businesses provide support for school activities by contributing monies, goods, and services.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Hurricane High School offers a wide variety of programs, co-curricular activities, and extracurricular activities to provide opportunities for stakeholders to develop a sense of community at the school. For example, one student who was interviewed said, "Most of my teachers are willing to help me before or after school with my work." Another student added, "Our activities try to involve everyone. I am not as involved as some, but I still feel like I am part of the school." A member of the Executive Council described how they have planned activities to meet the needs and interests of all students (e.g., the skating competition).

Beginning with the 2001-02 school year, Hurricane High School changed from a grades 10-12 high school to a grades 9-12 high school. This change brought new students, new teachers, and a new principal. In fact, the change meant that, for

one year, half of the student body was new (ninth and tenth grades). In addition, of the 54 certificated staff members, 28 have ten or fewer years of experience. The staff has made a concerted effort to build a community and develop working relationships with one another. For example, one new teacher said, “My fellow department members and I have met together often to discuss curriculum and they have helped me with ideas and strategies.” A veteran teacher said, “For many years we did not meet together (as a department), but with the addition of new teachers we had to meet. Now we meet because we want to work together and improve what we do.”

The school should continue to utilize the working relationships in place to move forward in the school improvement process. Departments need to focus upon the school mission and DRSLs by analyzing student work and developing departmental goals for improvement that are aligned with the school improvement plan. In addition, the school is encouraged to enhance its practice of comprehensive guidance and counseling for students.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Students, teachers, parents, support staff, administration, and community members have positive working relationships. Hurricane and the surrounding towns form a tight-knit community, and the school has capitalized upon this relationship. Local businesses and community members have donated goods, services, financial support, and scholarships to the school. The school and Dixie State College of Utah have a strong cooperative relationship allowing students to take upper-level courses that are not available at Hurricane High School. There is an active and functioning community council consisting of parents, a student, and the principal. Parent members of this group expressed to members of the Visiting Team that the school leadership and staff have intentionally invited and involved the community in the school.

The school is encouraged to continue to build these relationships to enhance student achievement and to achieve the goals in the action plan. The focus group discovered areas for improvement. Some specific areas of improvement include being open to suggestions from parents (the parent always knows more about the student than the school does) and more communication (especially positive communication) between the school and parents.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The school's organizational system and culture do encourage the commitment to continuous improvement through participation thorough participation in professional development. There is evidence that the staff has been involved with professional development. The Visiting Team agrees with the recommendations of the focus group: (1) It does little good to gain new knowledge without making practical, lasting, and documented classroom changes. (2) Another concern at this point is making a conscious effort to connect the learning experiences directly to the DRSLs and the action plan. Professional development needs to be more focused and in-depth so that teachers can implement best practices that align with the mission, DRSLs, and action plan.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

Hurricane High School is highly involved in the change process, and the staff supports the changes that are taking place. The staff is involved in training that promotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The Visiting Team agrees with the focus group's recommendation for improvement:

Staff-wide development must be based on student performance results, and then follow-up should occur. We need to improve the effort made to alert the community to changes happening in our school. We also need to address the training of teachers new to our school to ensure that we are all consistent in our objectives of education and the understanding of individual programs.

#### **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-X**

##### **Standard I – Educational Program**

This standard is met.

##### **Standard II – Student Personnel Services**

This standard is not met. Student-counselor ratio is stated as 425:1 in annual report dated October 15, 2002.

##### **Standard III – School Plant and Equipment**

This standard is met.

#### **Standard IV – Library Media Program**

This standard is met.

#### **Standard V – Records**

This standard is met.

#### **Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)**

This standard is met.

#### **Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel**

This standard is not met. Nine (9) teachers were underqualified for their assignments as of annual report dated October 15, 2002.

#### **Standard VIII – Administration**

This standard is met.

#### **Standard IX – Teacher Load**

This standard is met; however, one teacher had 210 students according to the annual report.

#### **Standard X – Activities**

This standard is met.

### **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

Hurricane High School recognizes that the goal of the self-study is to identify and plan for school improvement efforts that will result in leveraging student achievement. This is a significant departure from the old accreditation model, in which improvement efforts did not always focus on improving student performance. According to the school's self-study document, the action plan was "based upon the premise that effective teachers are a critical factor in increasing student performance." Furthermore, according to the report, the faculty "will

continue to examine and put into practice a myriad of strategies for powerful teaching and learning.” To this end, Goal #2 of the school’s action plan identifies a clear sequence of events, beginning with the identification of study groups to explore quality teaching methods and the creation of staff development opportunities focused on developing awareness and knowledge of effective teaching practices.

What is missing from the action plan for Goal #2 is (1) clarity as to how these practices will be implemented and refined in classrooms, (2) what accountability system (if any) will be put into place to ensure new strategies are implemented and how the school’s leadership team will monitor, and (3) a means to evaluate the effectiveness of the “study group” and “staff development opportunities” in facilitating the actual implementation of a “myriad of strategies for powerful teaching and learning.” Without a system of professional accountability, collegial support during implementation, and a means of evaluating staff development, it is likely many of these strategies will either fail to find their way into the classroom, or be insufficiently implemented. If either occurs, the time, effort, and resources channeled to Goal #2 may not result in raising student achievement.

Goal #2 is worthy of further discussion and planning on the part of the leadership team. It is highly recommended that the team become familiar with the recommendations of the National Council for Staff Development directed by Dennis Sparks, as well as the research of Bruce Joyce on effective staff development, before completing the action plan for this goal.

Goal #2 also addresses the need to develop “Essential Competencies” which link the DRSLs to the Core Curriculum. Although this work is not scheduled to be started until year three, the staff is encouraged to initiate this work on a small scale by piloting the development of assessment tools focused on one or two competencies. By experimenting with this process on a smaller scale the staff can collaborate in learning how to design high quality classroom assessment tools, score student work, and collect anchor papers for the future. Small pilots will help the staff prepare for a larger schoolwide effort in year three.

Goal #3 addresses the need for increasing collaboration among the staff. To this end, Hurricane High School has planned for involving parents and students in its study groups, increasing the effectiveness of department meetings, implementing peer coaching, and providing new teachers with a mentor for the first three years of their tenure. As with Goal #2, the leadership team needs to refine this goal to provide greater clarity in terms of (1) how the school will define success for each of these sub-goals, (2) how each of the goals will be monitored during the next six year and, (3) how each of the goals will be evaluated in for its impact on student learning. Research on effective schools supports the notion that significant increases in student achievement are rarely gained without collaboration. To this end, the leadership team and staff need to push their thinking a bit further and define (1) what will be the specific focus for planned collaboration, peer

coaching, mentoring; (2) what is the purpose for incorporating “all stakeholders in study groups”; and (3) how it can be determined whether these structures for collaboration are working.

Goal #1 addresses the need to ensure that classroom activities and lessons are aligned with the State Core and school DRSLs. The action plan acknowledges the school’s leadership role in providing all staff members the opportunity to become familiar with the State Core. The action plan also provides a means by which the school leadership (administration, curriculum focus group, and department heads) can monitor the alignment of state standards by requiring teachers to use the new Curriculum Planning Log. The leadership team has hypothesized that greater alignment will result in higher student achievement. Therefore, the team has planned to use achievement data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Curriculum Planning Logs as an alignment tool.

The leadership team has done a commendable job establishing a plan for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the success of Goal #1 with regard to alignment of content standards. However, such clarity is missing from the plan with regard to monitoring and evaluating student achievement of the DRSLs. Over the next six years, one of Hurricane High School’s greatest challenges will be to develop schoolwide agreement on and development of assessment tools that can be used to assess student achievement of the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

The majority of the Hurricane High School staff had the opportunity to review and/or provide input in the development of the action plan. It is assumed that, having had the opportunity for input, the staff will work collaboratively to ensure it is actualized.

The current action plan will require some revision to reflect the major recommendation of the Visiting Team, as well as the recommendations for improving the existing action plan. The Visiting Team is confident that the school’s leadership team will work to create awareness and commitment among the staff regarding these recommendations as well.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

Overall, the current action plan does not clearly articulate an effective method for evaluating the impact of school improvement efforts on student achievement. As a result of the site visit, the administrative team understands the importance of collecting and using significant data to evaluate the effectiveness of the school’s improvement efforts. It is clear that Hurricane High School is moving forward in its quest to become researched-based and data-driven. With further discussion and



refinement, Hurricane High School will be well on the way to achieving this goal. Kudos to the school and leadership team for their efforts.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the administration, staff, parents, and students for their sincere effort to establish a collaborative process for addressing school improvement goals. It is evident to the Visiting Team that what may have started out as a process that the staff viewed as “something we have to do” became, for many, an opportunity for reflection, collaboration, leadership, and learning. The Visiting Team commends the staff for its willingness to both learn from and lead this process on behalf of students. Leadership among the staff is evident and supported at Hurricane High School
- The Visiting Team commends the staff for its efforts to develop and maintain a sense of community and a culture of continuous improvement. The school recognizes that real school improvement requires time, commitment, and healthy professional relationships among staff, parents, and students. This sense of community will be critical to the school’s success in the work ahead.
- The Visiting Team commends the teaching staff for its study and desire to implement research-based instructional practices. Some of the teachers at Hurricane High School were observed using a wide variety of instructional approaches, including cooperative learning, Socratic Seminars, engaging review activities, inquiry-based projects, manipulatives, and student-led discussions. These teachers are to be commended for continually seeking new teaching methodologies to support the wide variety of student learners in their classes.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that Hurricane High School continue to develop a comprehensive system for gathering, analyzing, and using data to drive school improvement and decision making. These efforts should extend to gathering and using data to monitor and evaluate improvement efforts as they are implemented and refined. Additionally, the school is encouraged to seek suggestions from targeted student subgroups (identified as needing additional support) before acting on their behalf. Revision of the school’s current action plan to reflect this need would serve as a first step.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school staff explore ways to explicitly teach and assess the school's DRSLs. Currently, most students interviewed by the Visiting Team are completely unaware of the DRSLs. If these desired results truly reflect the collective vision of the school for student learning, then they need to play a central role in the design of curriculum and the instructional delivery system, and need to be assessed overtly. The school is encouraged to research how other schools are teaching and assessing these learning goals.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff explore and implement a professional development program that will provide **all teachers** with the opportunity to refine their craft and employ research-based practices. The vast majority of teachers interviewed express a desire to learn how to differentiate instruction, work more effectively with special education students, and support second-language learners. However, this desire was coupled with a frustration regarding lack of time and opportunity to perfect new methodologies.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff engage in dialogue leading to the alignment of courses to Utah Core Curriculum Standards. This would include adopting appropriate Core Curriculum Standards in non-Core courses and electives to support student achievement. Additionally, Core content areas are encouraged to set performance standards for "essential" standards and create common benchmark assessments for each department that can be used to monitor student process and make adjustments to the curricular program.